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ABSTRACT

This book addresses the need for anthropologists to produce in-depth ethnographies of children's play. In examining the subject from a cross-cultural perspective, the book argues that understanding the way children transform their environment to create make-believe is enhanced by viewing their creations as oral poetry. The result is a richly detailed description of how pretense is socially mediated and linguistically constructed, how children make sense of their own play, how play relates to other imaginative genres in Huli (Papua, New Guinea) life, and the relationship between play and cosmology. The book analyzes the source for imitation, the kinds of identities and roles emulated, and the structure of collaborative make-believe talk to reveal the complex way in which children invoke their experiences of the world and reinvent them as types of virtual reality. Following introductory sections, chapter one, "Naming and Gaming," addresses ethnographic context, rhyming, and renaming structures. Chapter two, "Pretend Play," examines the storytelling genre mode and socio-dramatic play moves. Chapter three, "Changing Roles," examines objects and roles, and choosing identities. Chapter four, "The Ogre: A Melanesian Cyclops," examines ogres in Melanesian literature and narrative conventions and imagination. Chapter five, "The Trickster: A Melanesian Enantiomorph," addresses paradigms of pretence and imagination. Research transcripts are appended. Contains a 382-item bibliography. (SD)

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